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ABSTRACT

This final report from the symposium on shut out youth concentrates on the problems of homeless young people in European cities. Remarks and recommendations of the symposium are reviewed. Homelessness is a growing trend among young people in Europe and most governments show little recognition of the problem. There is little social policy and legislation that considers the social, housing, and employment needs of youth. The same patterns and lack of concern are seen as homelessness among North American youth is reviewed. The following issues are discussed as prime areas of social policy where these problems may be addressed: (1) human rights; (2) legal status of youth; (3) youth policy; (4) youth participation; (5) education; (6) employment and income; (7) housing; (8) social support for families; and (9) children of the state. Specific recommendations are made for national, regional, and local governments, and for the Council of Europe. The appendices include notes from the workshop groups, the conference agenda, a list of participants, a history of the European Young Homelessness Group, a bibliography of publications and agencies, a list of videos shown during the symposium, and a supplementary list of useful addreses. (VM)

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SYMPOSIUM ON "SHUT OUT YOUTH"

25-30 October 1987

EUROPEAN YOUTH CENTRE

The European Young Homelessness Group

FINAL REPORT

by

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SHELTER, Scotland
General Rapporteur of the Symposium

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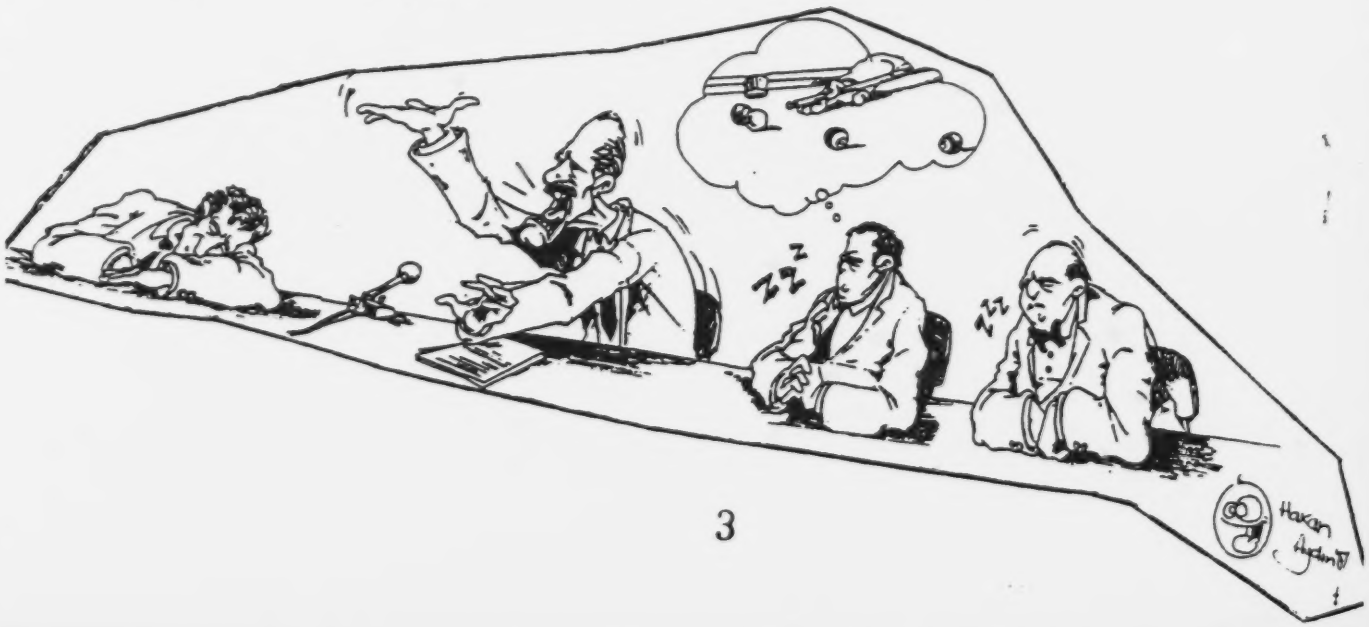

INTRODUCTION

This report contains the Final Report of the General Rapporteur of the Symposium on 'Shut Out Youth' and the participants' recommendations, as presented to a plenary meeting on the last day of the Symposium. Remarks made during this session have been incorporated in this revised version of the report which will be submitted to the Governing Board of the European Youth Centre and to the 'Ad Hoc Committee on Youth Questions (CAHJF)'.

Additional documentation on the Symposium is available through the EYC secretariat and is listed in Appendix IX. It remains to be hoped that all partners in the Symposium - the European Young Homelessness Group in the first place, but also the researchers, government experts, social workers and youth representatives - will make the case of the homeless a major preoccupation in future work and that the recommendations will be considered by the two important parliamentary bodies in Europe - the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament.

* * * * *

FOREWORD

In 1985 the Council of Europe indicated its support for the three main principles of the United Nations' International Year of Youth: "Peace, Participation and Development", by inviting young people to Strasbourg "to carry out an experiment in participation by young people who have something to say". During European Youth Week, young people identified as one of their concerns the inadequacy of housing policy and provision in European States to meet the personal and social aspirations of young people. Concern was expressed for young people who are homeless; for young people living in prolonged dependency with their families as a consequence of unemployment and poverty, and for young people who are inadequately housed by private landlords or by local authorities.

Also in 1985, the European Young Homeless Group, a network of professionals, researchers and policy makers concerned with the housing problems of young people, approached the European Youth Centre and the European Youth Foundation for assistance in bringing the concerns of homeless young people to the notice of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the international youth organisations. Social exclusion, it was argued, as demonstrated in its most extreme form by the evidence of increasing homelessness amongst young people, is entirely contrary to the policies of youth participation fostered by these bodies. The outcome of this initiative was the holding of this symposium 'Shut Out Youth in Europe'.

The aim of the United Nations International Year of Shelter for the Homeless is to focus public attention on homeless people and on substandard housing conditions wherever they exist. The resolution of these problems depends on the promotion of world peace, the more equal redistribution of world resources and the empowering of oppressed minorities to promote their own solutions to their conditions.

In choosing to focus on the specific needs of young people in Europe the organisers of the symposium do not intend to separate youth interests from those of the remainder of mankind. Rather, the participants at this

symposium intend their observations and recomendations to be received as one small contribution towards the development of more just societies in the world. Having identified the problems faced by young people who are excluded from the mainstream considerations of society, we have no wish to aggravate the young peoples' isolation by suggesting that they should be the isolated focus of our concern.

The principal instigators of the symposium are professional workers in services for homeless young people and those with related problems, others come from the managerial or policy development sectors or are researchers into youth affairs. Only a minority of the participants were young people with direct experience of homelessness. This body does not pretend to speak on behalf of young people or to represent their views. The need for greater assistance to be given to 'shut out' young people to enable them to speak for themselves and to take action on their own behalf is identified in the the symposium report as a vital feature of any effective response to these young peoples' needs.

In drafting this report I have attempted to reflect with accuracy and I hope with some passion the concerns of all participants. But, as a personal view of the symposium, the report inevitably reflects some of my own preoccupations and perspectives. I experienced many difficulties between the ages of 16 and 25, including having no place which I could call home; I was also exposed to many of the risks and dangers which concern us when we consider the situation of homeless young people today. During the course of these experiences I heard many descriptions, definitions and prescriptions for solving my difficulties. But I was never asked what I thought was the problem. Or, perhaps, I don't remember being asked because no one ever acted on what I had to say. That experience has still not prevented me, as I have moved into various professional roles with regard to helping young people, from imposing my own interpretations, theories and programes onto the debate, as if I, somehow, had achieved a better understanding of young peoples' circumstances than they have themselves.

Most of us have taken some interesting turnings, sought out risk or danger, or acted without a thought for the future at some stage in our lives. Most people will, also, have had experience of not being in control of their destiny, of having had conditions created for them or decisions made for them which have had a lasting impact on their ability to create their own lifestyle and to take responsibility for themselves. Such experiences can have profound implications for an individual's ability to make personal choices and to deal with many mundane and practical aspects of daily life.

Many of us, especially if we achieve any kind of personal or social success in our lives bury the memory of these events and of what they meant to us when we were younger. In my view this is not helpful to young people today who can feel isolated before a population of adults who appear to have had perfect parents and to have conducted themselves impeccably in their youth. I hope that the exploration, during this symposium at the European Youth Centre, of some of the personal aspects of participants' previous experiences as well as of the technical issues surrounding our proposals for a radical change in the direction of European social policy with regard to youth will, with the assistance of youth organisations, encourage many more of the 'Shut Out' youth of Europe to speak out for themselves.

THE HOMELESS TYPE - A FABLE

Some children live with their parents. The father has no job, the mother works but earns little. For many years the parents have felt trapped in a decaying house which they cannot afford to maintain or improve. Their love for each other and their concern for their childrens' future have become a battleground of self recrimination and mutual accusation. The children are deeply attached to their home, but they do not find it to be a happy place.

When the childrens' schooling ends they spend their days looking for work or meeting with other young people in the town. At home they try to avoid their parents' arguments and nagging. There is no social life for young people in the street where they live and they become strangers to the neighbours they once knew when they were younger.

One day they return from the town to find their home dark and closed. Their parents have gone, separately, to find new lives now that their children have grown up. Because the young people have not talked to their parents for some time, the parents believe that they are not needed any more.

At first the young people search the house for an unshuttered window or an unlocked door. But the house is securely sealed and there is no way in. The young people sleep in their old tree house in the garden. Next day they ask their friends in town for help but there is nothing they can do. The young people return to the house. They are cold and hungry and they have nowhere to keep clean.

At last the young people become angry and frustrated. They attack the window shutters and the doors. Neighbours look out but nobody comes to help. They throw stones at the neighbours windows. The police arrive and take them away.

In court, the judge says, "You are guilty of breaking windows and of sleeping in trees. Such anti-social behaviour demonstrates that you must have been very difficult children for your parents to raise. You returned all their care by idling about town all day and ignoring them all night. No wonder they could take no more. Now your parents cannot be found to care for you and to control your behaviour. You are a threat to the happiness and security of your neighbours. You cannot expect us to find another place for you to live in this town. You have brought all this upon yourselves. Until you find work and show that you have something positive to contribute to society you can expect nothing from me.

THE END

CONDITIONS OF HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE

There are no comprehensive and reliable statistics for the extent of homelessness amongst the member States of the Council of Europe. The Committee on Social Affairs and Employment of the European Parliament estimated that 10% of the population of EEC countries are homeless people and that 50% of these homeless people are less than thirty years of age. Extrapolated to the 21 countries of the Council of Europe, this would suggest an estimated 40 million people aged under thirty, married, cohabiting and single, who experience acute homelessness or who are not secure in their homes.

In countries where estimates of the incidence of youth homelessness have been made on the basis of returns from local authorities and voluntary organisations, it appears that approximately 0.25% of the population are acutely homeless young people under the age of 25. As it is known that a high proportion of cases of youth homelessness are not recorded this would suggest to us a minimum of 1 million homeless young people in the member States of the Council of Europe. The true incidence of youth homelessness lies somwhere between this estimate and the estimate of homelessness amongst under thirty year olds in member States of the Council of Europe. This goes some way to explaining why, in research in both Britain and France , the fear of homelessness figures high amongst the major anxieties of young people.

The reality of homelessness for these young people varies, from street life, to vagrancy in search of employment and other opportunities, through to subsistence in low quality housing and squats. The details of the evidence of the lifestyles of homeless young people presented to this symposium in the form of videos, photographs and report are too extensive to do justice to in this report. But it is evident that the restricted lifestyles of these young people place them in particular risk to their physical and psychological health and make them vulnerable to economic exploitation and sexual abuse.

Much of what is known about homeless young people is learned from the experience of services which are established to help them. It is important to recognise that the available information is biased in this way as the composition of the client groups of these services may be influenced by features of service delivery as much as by the reality of need.

Ethnic minority youth, for instance may make limited use of services which they do not regard as sympathetic to them. Equally lesbian, gay and bisexual young people may feel threatened by the living conditions of a mixed sex hostel. There are many other reasons , such as a dislike of sharing sleeping accomodation, why young people may not use available services. Many young people feel that identifying themselves to a helping agency as a person in need of aid is, in some way an admission of personal defeat on their part.

Secondly, the client group of a helping agency may not, unless there is a specific outreach role, include all groups of homeless young people. The admission policies of services for homeless young people sometimes exclude specific groups such as drug abusers or those who are mentally ill. Some homeless young people are absorbed into youth subcultures which provide them with temporary shelter. Other young people may support themselves on the street by prostitution or drugs dealing. Finally many homeless young people are absorbed into the homes of relatives and friends on a temporary basis without in any way resolving their problem of homelessness, but without coming to the attention of helping agencies or the authorities.

Care must, therefore, be taken in deriving conclusions about youth homelessness in general from the experience of helping agencies, however excellent the service they provide. In general, all age services for the homeless attract a small proportion of young people and tend to under-represent the problem. Agencies providing structured programmes of accommodation, counselling and assistance to homeless young people tend to attract the younger age group. Agencies providing overnight shelter with less emphasis on developmental programmes attract a wider age and needs range of young people who perhaps prefer the relative anonymity of such facilities. Agencies which provide a wide range of advice and assistance to young people with housing needs, which includes information on access to rented housing as well as to crisis shelter are most likely to attract the widest range of young people in housing need.

This is not to suggest that in any way the information derived from the experience of helping agencies is invalid, only that it is not the whole story. There are however some key elements of an understanding of the phenomenon of youth homelessness which are apparent from the available evidence and which are likely to be true for homeless people in general.

Firstly, and perhaps this is one of the most important messages of the symposium, there is no stereotype of a homeless young person, there is no 'homeless type'. No aspects of psychopathology have ever been identified which incline some people rather than others towards homelessness. Aspects of class, race and gender affect a persons' chance of experiencing homelessness only in the sense that they contribute towards the preconditions for homelessness. Young women; for instance are not more likely to become homeless simply because they are women. However, social or economic discrimination against women may, in certain circumstances, place a young woman at greater risk of homelessness than a young man.

Secondly, homelessness is intimately linked with unemployment. The majority of homeless young people are not in any kind of formal employment. Many of them have never experienced full time employment. It would also appear that the parents of homeless young people are likely to have been adversely affected by unemployment. This unemployment has its inevitable consequences in terms of increasing poverty for families and individuals and it would seem that the family unit - whatever form it takes - is stretched beyond its capacity to cope.

Thirdly, it would appear that a higher proportion of homeless young people are more likely to have lost a biological parent through death, separation or divorce than is the norm in the population as a whole. This feature is of course moderated in individual countries by the prevailing laws and mores governing marriage and the conduct of individual behaviour. Depending on the stage in the young persons' life at which this happens and on the ability of family or others to absorb the consequences of these losses, there is the possibility of the young person being taken into institutional care. In countries where this process is adopted, approximately one in four of all homeless young people become homeless after an experience of institutional care. Young people who have experienced this kind of disrupted family life are likely to have relatively few stable personal relationships of long duration outside their peer group and are able to call on few people for practical assistance when they are in need.

It should not be assumed, however, that these disabling life experiences produce young people who are in any sense less competent than their peers to cope with the realities of their lives. At the time of crisis it may be true that homeless young people are depressed by their prospects and are

disinclined to commit themselves to any one course of action. But this is only human nature. Those who work with homeless young people know what the young people know themselves, that they are as talented and as able a group as any other in society. Nor should the fact of homelessness be construed as an indicator of any kind of apathy and fatalism in the individual. Many young people have experienced personal and social conditions which would have defeated many another person and have survived intact to take control of their lives once they have the opportunity.

In particular, the young people attending the symposium wanted more attention to be drawn to the fact of sexual abuse of children by parents, relatives and professional carers, as well as by strangers. This form of abuse is becoming an increasingly recognised feature of life in many European countries. The consequences of such experiences can be long lasting for the victims, whose basic trust of social and personal relationships can be severely undermined.

Shut out youth in Europe have suffered much, but they are not a passive group only in need of protection and direction. Given the support and the resources, they are as capable as anyone of making their impact on the world.

* * * * *

RESPONSES TO THE PHENOMENON OF SHUT OUT YOUTH IN EUROPE

The increasing phenomenon of youth homelessness in Europe has not gone unnoticed. As long ago as 1972 the Council of Europe was calling for action to deal with a growing problem. Since then a succession of international, national and local reports have described the increasing incidence of youth homelessness and have called for a coordinated response by relevant bodies to deal with it. It should be an embarrassment to the bodies concerned to realise on just how many occasions they have failed to respond effectively to these calls. The most recent European report on homelessness from the Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament emphasized the needs of young homeless people. Although the report was approved unopposed by the Parliament the Commission has failed to allocate any resources to improving its knowledge and understanding of the problem or to initiating any responses to deal with it.

Some governments, especially those with a commitment to developing youth policy and provision, make signal efforts to ensure that young people do not feel excluded from social processes. These governments encourage the development of a wide range of housing provision for young people and subsidise this provision so that young people can afford to use it.

Some local authorities also take a constructive lead in attempting to ensure adequate housing provision for young people, both emergency and long term, with many authorities providing advice and assistance to young people to help them in their goal of succeeding as tenants.

Undoubtedly, though, it is the voluntary sector which has taken the lead and played the fullest part in recognising and responding to the problems of shut out youth. The evidence of the symposium demonstrated the variety and scale of the services developed by voluntary organisations where humane practices have developed out of policies and principles which are more sympathetic perhaps than those of the authorities to the needs of homeless youth.

Too often however, the good intentions of the voluntary organisations to create responsive services are thwarted by the inadequate funding they are given with which to operate. Voluntary organisations should be stimulated to set up new ways of helping by giving them financial means for development and innovation, as a regular feature of their budget. Services also need to be enabled to conduct regular reviews of their operations in order to ensure that they are achieving the goals which they were set.

The assistance which they receive is very significant to homeless young people and they assess it in part by the quality of relationship which they can develop with the person who is delivering it. Too often the social worker appears to the young person to be out of touch with their problem and not committed to meeting their needs. Often this is a result of staff being required to work unsupported or inadequately rewarded in highly stressful situations. It can appear especially inconsistent to a young person that the organisation which claims that its remit is to care for them appears to be incapable of caring satisfactorily for its own staff. Additional training and support is required for those working with Shut Out Youth.

Finally it should not be forgotten that young people are aware of their situation and are capable of responding to it. Throughout the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless there have been demonstrations and protests by young people about their social conditions. Some of these were documented at the symposium. Young people with experience of homelessness are also involved in practical projects to create housing for their own and other's use.

TRANSATLANTIC RESPONSES TO SHUT OUT YOUTH

Youth homelessness is a phenomenon throughout the world and those concerned with it seem to be facing the same difficulties in resolving it despite the jurisdiction in which they reside. In North America and Canada these difficulties can be summarised as :

public apathy;
funding constraints;
bureaucratic resistance;
the difficulties of serving hard to serve youth;
juridictional disputes;

America has a federally-funded national network of services for 'runaway' youth below the age of eighteen. Services for shut out youth above that age are uncoordinated and inadequate. Canadian agencies have recently been able to coordinate national consultations on legislation and policy on issues relating to youth homelessness and are now coordinating a street workers network. The youth in care network aims to empower young people to be involved in the design development and nature of the services which are intended for them. This is not without controversy and difficulty but the aim is to transfer power to the young people themselves. There is a trend towards the establishment of emergency shelters throughout the country; independent living programmes and cooperative efforts amongst courts, law enforcement agencies, mandated care services and private agencies. Some agencies are experimenting with joint housing/employment of a cooperative nature.

SOCIAL POLICY ISSUES AFFECTING SHUT OUT YOUTH

A number of central issues relating to the needs of Shut Out youth emerged from the symposium. Together they form a critique of the social policy environment for young people in Europe. Through the discussion of these issues emerged a picture of decreasing opportunities and resources for young people at the same time as they are being required to take more responsibility for their personal welfare and development outside the traditional structures of employment and social organisation.

Human Rights

Young people who are effectively excluded from the social and economic communities in which they live, to the extent that they have no home and little or no income, become very aware that they have no recourse in their distress to any final arbitration which will ensure a reinstatement of their social status. At best, so far as the legal system is concerned, they can only call on the discretionary protection of enabling legislation which gives authorities powers to meet their needs but which does not insist that they do so. At worst the legal codes actually punish them for the circumstances in which they find themselves, as in those situations where homeless young people are imprisoned for vagrancy. The situation in which a person defined as being 'of no fixed abode' can, as a consequence of this definition, be denied access to housing, legal, medical and other services is unacceptable in any human society and should no longer be tolerated in Europe.

Participants at this symposium on Shut Out Youth insisted that European and other international organisations should give unequivocal recognition to the human right to housing, to freedom of movement, to an income adequate to enable normal participation in society and access to medical care and to legal aid. In order to ensure the proper implementation of these rights, an Ombudsperson for Youth should be appointed in all member States and by the Council of Europe.

Legal Status of Youth

Attention has been drawn by the European Parliament to the 'jungle of special provisions' which characterise the legal codes of member States with regard to the legal age of majority and to the legal status of children and young people (see Appendix V). In one part of Europe a 16 year old has the legal status of an adult, with the ability to contract in their own right for housing and other services. The same young person living elsewhere would still require the signature of a parent or tutor for the same contract until they reach the age of 21. Such wide variations in legal status and the consequences which derive from them mitigate against the mobility of young people within Europe; they also mitigate against the implementation of basic human rights for those young adults who are regarded in law as dependents of their parents.

All young people in EEC countries are legally competent to decide to leave school and to contract for their employment from the age of 16. There appears to be no rational reason why this same age limit should not be extended to the age of majority under civil law. Whatever age limit can be agreed, the principle should be to achieve a common age of civil majority throughout Europe.

Youth Policy

Consistent with the acknowledgment of a range of human rights with respect to young people and a strengthening of their position in the legal codes of member States, is the need for a plan for implementing and maintaining the status of young people as full citizens. Such a plan, a social policy for the development of youth and for the full integration of young people into society, should be devised by all governments, international, national and local in Europe. Such plans should detail the means by which authorities intend to meet the essential needs of young people in the fields of education for independence, employment, income, housing, health etc; together with a costing of the measures required. At the same time all governments should be required to produce a youth impact statement as part of any policy proposal, detailing the consequences for young people of the measures proposed.

Youth Participation

An essential feature of the development of social policy for youth must be a commitment to the full participation of young people in the planning process. A key aspect of this commitment should be a willingness to spend money on making it possible for young people to participate. Just as members of parliaments and councils and their expert advisers are provided with resources to research their concerns and to present their case, so, also, young people should be adequately resourced to enable them to comment and campaign on the issues which affect them. Youth organisations which exist to represent the views of young people to governments should ensure, also, that it is not only the views of the most vocal young people which is heard in their councils but that they make efforts to ensure that all young people are able to make their views known.

Education

Participants at the symposium noted that a high proportion of homeless young people and of young people experiencing other forms of social exclusion had been poor attenders at school. Young people who do not identify with the priorities of the education system and who exclude themselves from its activities are clearly at risk of a continuing career of social exclusion. It is very important that preventive measures to limit this risk should be implemented in schools, in youth organisations and in other places where young people spend a lot of their time. These measures should include the development of educational programmes which will foster a better understanding by young people of family processes and the development of sexual identity, as well as to the development of practical and administrative skills appropriate to the creation of new forms of employment such as cooperatives.

Employment and Income

The symposium was opposed to new measures within Europe with regard to the replacement of a right to social security income for homeless young people with a facility for governments to provide training and resources in kind, rather than in cash. Together with moves to establish differential rates of social security payments for those below and above the age of 25, this policy constitutes an unacceptable discrimination against the young. In addition to a greater political and financial commitment on the part of governments to promote and support new forms of employment for young people, the symposium called for the institution of a minimum income for all young people at a level which makes it possible to make real choices about their style of living and which enables them to participate in all normal social activities.

Housing

Emergency accommodation, adequately staffed and resourced to meet the needs of all homeless young people should be provided by the local authorities in every town. It should be of good quality and humane inoperation. Access should be without conditions, but support and social work assistance should be available if required. This service should be linked to other more permanent forms of housing.

There should be a national youth housing policy in each country linked to youth policy and to overall housing policy and provision to meet the housing aspirations of young people. The priority of housing providers should be to assist young people to succeed as tenants and to integrate them into local communities. Housing for young people should be developed in the context of the infrastructure of employment, educational and recreational facilities which young people require.

Throughout Europe young people are living in poor standard, under equipped housing with which they are unable to establish any identity or sense of belonging. Where personal earned incomes are inadequate, housing and personal social security subsidies should be set at levels sufficient to enable a young person to turn a house into a home.

Social Support for Families

Incomes and other social provision should be adequate to enable families and individuals to make real choices about their lifestyles. Homes should not become prisons for parents and young people who do not have the resources to exercise real choice. In many countries, financial support to the families of unemployed young people is being reduced or withdrawn, in others it has never been introduced; at the same time the families are being required to accept more of the economic burden of the impact of unemployment and poverty. In these conditions family friction leads to family dissolution, one consequence of which is homelessness amongst young people. A total revision of current welfare policy with regard to the family is required in most European States.

Children of the State

Many young people are taken into the care of State institutions, for their own protection or because the family is unable to cope in the current economic situation. Often the State is a poor parent offering only inconsistent care and failing to prepare young people for independent life. Facilities for young people in care should be improved and the young people should have the security of continuing personal contact with at least one adult throughout their time in care. Whilst young people should be able to make the choice of leaving or remaining in care once they reach the age of sixteen, the care system should not be at liberty to abandon them. Young people leaving care should be entitled to call on the resources and assistance of the local authority at least until they are 21.

SUMMARY

In this report I have attempted to outline the background to the main recommendations of the symposium. I have not referred to every aspect of the issue, some areas of which are dealt with comprehensively in the symposium papers. However, a clear trend emerges from the information we have considered.

Homelessness is an extreme example of a general trend towards the exclusion of young people from important areas of community life. There is little recognition of the social needs of the unemployed and governments are unwilling to meet the full social costs of youth unemployment.

The increase in youth homelessness and housing demand stems from increasing family and youth unemployment, deepening poverty and from changing demographic trends and family structures. Current housing and social welfare policies are inadequate to meet these needs. Especially at risk of homelessness and social exclusion as a result of this imbalance between demand and provision, are young people with insecure or unsatisfactory family backgrounds. Welfare services are not sensitive to the risks these young people face and preventative provision is poor. Legal codes are inadequate to support the autonomy of young people or to protect those in crisis. Young people are demoralised and placed at risk in the current social environment and steps must be taken to oppose discrimination.

WHAT IS NEEDED :

i. The development of comprehensive social policies with regard to young people, with special regard to combatting discrimination on the grounds of race or gender;

ii. The inclusion of youth housing needs in government housing policies;

iii. The development of a legal framework and practical systems to provide the fullest protection for homeless people including the abolition of existing vagrancy laws;

iv. The provision of adequate housing and welfare subsidies to enable unemployed young people to maintain a quality of life which does not exclude them from the mainstream of society;

v. The promotion of the above policies amongst their member States;

vi. The fostering of an exchange of information concerning youth housing between governments, non-governmental organisations and youth associations;

vii. The establishment of a body to co-ordinate the development of youth housing policies and services throughout Europe.

Damian KILLEEN
SHELTER (Scotland)
for the European Young Homeless Group

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants at the Symposium on "Shut Out Youth" welcome the initiative of the United Nations to dedicate the year 1987 to the worldwide problem of Shelter for the Homeless. They declare their concern and solidarity about the shocking numbers of homeless people in the world.

Being themselves involved in various ways with the situation of the young homeless in Europe, the participants recommend:

To national, regional and local governments:

- that a social policy for the development of youth and for the full integration of young people into society should be devised by national, regional and local governments in Europe. Such plans should detail the means by which authorities intend to meet the essential needs of young people in the fields of education for independence, employment, income, housing, health etc, together with a costing of the measures required;

- a youth impact statement as part of any policy proposal, detailing the consequences for young people of the measures proposed;

- to spend money on making it possible for young people to participate in society. Just as members of parliament and councils and their expert advisers are provided with resources to research their concerns and to present their case, so, also, young people should be adequately resourced to enable them to comment and campaign on the issues which affect them;

- to combat social exclusion of young people. It is very important that preventive measures to limit this risk should be implemented in schools, in youth organisations and in other places where young people spend a lot of their time. These measures should relate to the better understanding by young people of family processes and the development of sexual identity, as well as to the development of practical and administrative skills appropriate to the creation of new forms of employment such as cooperatives.

- to provide for a minimum income for all young people at a level which makes it possible to make real choices about their style of living and which enables them to participate in all normal social activities. Incomes and other social provisions should be adequate to enable families and individuals to make real choices about their lifestyles;

- to provide for emergency accommodation, adequately staffed and resourced to meet the needs of all homeless young people by the local authorities in every town. Access should be without conditions, but support and social work assistance should be available if required. This service should be linked to other more permanent forms of housing;

- to introduce immediately, in countries where no right to shelter exists, legislation to give homeless people a legal statutory right to shelter

- to develop a national youth housing policy in each country linked to youth policy and to overall housing policy and provision to meet the housing aspirations of young people. The priority of housing providers should be to assist young people to succeed as tenants and to integrate them into local communities. Housing for young people should be developed in the context of the infrastructure of employment, educational and recreational facilities which they require;

- to improve facilities for young people in care and assure that the young people should have the security of personal contact with at least one adult throughout their time in care. Whilst young people should be able to make the choice of leaving or remaining in care once they reach the age of sixteen, the care system should not be at liberty to abandon them and young people leaving care should be entitled to call on the resources and assistance of the local authority at least until they are 21.

In view of the forthcoming second Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth on 11-12 April 1988 in Oslo, the participants recommend:

To the Council of Europe:

- to give unequivocal recognition to the human right to housing, to freedom of movement, to an income adequate to enable normal participation in society and access to medical care and to legal aid;

- to create a European Day for the Homeless;

- to propose the appointment of an Ombudsperson for Youth in all member States;

- to provide comprehensive and reliable statistics on the extent of homelessness in the member States of the Council of Europe;

- to harmonize the age of majority with respect to civil, criminal and social legislation in all member states of the Council of Europe;

- to open the facilities of the European Youth Centre to provide additional training and support for those working with Shut Out Youth;

- to develop a global policy against poverty and to complete anti-discrimination legislation in member countries.

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In conclusion, the Symposium recommends that the Council of Europe, the European Community and their member States:

1. Recognize the urgent need to establish and fund a EUROPEAN HOMELESS NETWORK which will bring together the interests and concerns of all those involved in the field of homelessness and particularly the young.

2. Recognize the need to establish reliable information about the scope of the problem of young people who are "shut out" of appropriate housing, education and welfare services.

APPENDIX I

GROUP I : SOCIAL POLICY AND SHUT OUT YOUTH

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

1. We note that present youth policies are not based on the recognition of a young person's right to speak out. Thus, these policies do not provide young people with the means to express themselves so that they can take part in decision-making.

2. Concerning housing policies, we note young people's difficulties in getting access to housing. Some groups of young people are especially disadvantaged because of their social origin, sex, race, culture, illnesses they suffer from (eg. AIDS). Solutions proposed to young people in the field of housing are not sufficiently diversified to take into account their differing needs.

3. Family policies do not provide families with sufficient material, cultural support to enable them to bring up their children as long as need be. Moreover, the same policies do not enable young people to leave their families and become autonomous because of a lack of means (training, employment, income).

4. Education, training policies

We note that schools do not enable all young people to master basic elements: reading, writing, counting. Furthermore, we note that vocational training is not sufficiently adapted to social and technological developments and to other systems of production (cooperatives, self-management ...). Finally, we note that the whole educational system does not provide the basis for an autonomous social life.

Employment

Young people, including those with less training, are particularly affected by unemployment. Jobs offered to young people are very often precarious, with hard working conditions and low salaries. Without wages, young people are without income. They are therefore often excluded from social security benefits and, in particular, from health care. The absence of a fixed home also results in exclusion from the social welfare system.

Conclusion

Social policies should recognise young people as having legal status. Measures must therefore be taken to secure their access to different rights. These rights, and the policies which implement them are inseparable: a housing policy cannot be conceived without being linked to training, employment, family policies.

We are therefore especially worried about the absence of a global youth policy, the priority of which should be the most disadvantaged young people.

GENERAL REMARKS

All social policies must be based on the rights of young people to have their say and to take action towards helping themselves. Resources must be made available to enable young people to participate in decisions which affect them and to help themselves in whatever way they consider to be appropriate.

1. The European Community and the Council of Europe should expand their programmes of education on the transition from school to working life and the process of leaving home to include the transition from home or institutional care to independent life. Such a programme should encourage and insist on dialogue between State bodies, voluntary groups, parents and young people at local, national and European level.

2. The European Community and Council of Europe should investigate and encourage programmes of education for the public, workers with young people and young people to raise public awareness and understanding about the issue of homelessness.

3. A training programme should be developed for those working with young people to promote a flexible attitude to social policy and to realise the inter-relationship between policy issues and the impact on young people. Research into working and training methods is needed and should be funded by the Council of Europe and the European Community.

4. Housing

i) Access to emergency accommodation for all young people be ensured in every town. This accommodation should be secured by the public sector. It should be of good quality and humane in operation. Access should be without conditions, but support and social work assistance should be available if required. This should be linked to other more permanent forms of accommodation.

ii) Within two years there should be a national youth housing policy as part of overall housing policy and provision to meet the housing needs and aspirations of young people. The objective of this policy should be to integrate young people's housing into the local community.

iii) The transition from parental home or institutional care is a normal event. Special attention must be paid to the needs of young people leaving care by statutory authorities.

5. Legal

i) There should be a review of legal status of young people in EEC member States.

ii) We recommend the appointment of ombudspeople for young people nationally and for the European Community.

iii) The legal status of children and young people as full citizens should be clarified and established where necessary and ensuring the right of access to services.

iv) Young people should have ease of access to legal counsel and representation regardless of financial means.

v) There is a legal discrepancy between the age of leaving school and age of majority. This is highlighted in provision of financial support. The solution does not lie simply in a reduction of age of majority but rather in a more flexible approach to providing a sufficient income to live.

6. Employment and work

Young people should have access to jobs on the same basis as adults. They should not be discriminated against because of their age and forced to accept poorly paid jobs with relatively poor conditions.

Young people who are unemployed should receive sufficient financial income and other resources to enable them to help themselves.

The income of young people working on various forms of community programme and training schemes should be sufficient to allow an acceptable standard of living.

APPENDIX II

GROUP II : METHODS AND MODELS OF WORKING PRACTICE

Introduction

We wish above all to assert emphatically that human dignity should not be jeopardised on grounds of residential status. Hence homeless youth, just like any other sector of the populaton, must have their most elementary rights respected. In this regard, we insist on the unequivocal recognition of the right to an income, housing, and access to medical care and legal aid. Such rights should be available to all persons having attained their majority notwithstanding the unrestricted enjoyment by minors of social welfare measures.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS
concerning all young persons living in Europe

1. No political, economic or social right shall be subject to the fact of having no fixed abode or domicile.

2. The right to housing necessarily involves :

- widest possible provision of information and advice
- making vacant accommodation available
- adaptation of forms of personal assistance to obtain accommodation depending on the particular situation of each young person
- free movement of persons without any restrictive criteria on choosing domicile
- equitable housing subsidies which would guarantee access and permanency in a range of suitable housing for young people
- sustain support by all welfare services and bodies with a similar purpose
- financial commitment by States which in all events must keep housing policy as a priority within their jurisdiction without thereby adversely affecting populations in difficulty.

3. The right to income maintenance involves:

- adequate level of weekly/monthly maintenance in relation to existing living standards so that the young person is not excluded from normal participation in society
- an exceptional needs payment which could meet their special situation of being homeless.

4. Legal harmonisation at European level with coincidence of civil and penal majority.

5. An information campaign launched by the Council of Europe to convey to the general public the results of the symposium on the situation of homeless young persons.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Repeal of laws on vagrancy and begging. No fines shall be imposed on the homeless simply because they have no fixed domicile.

Extension and harmonisation of all alternatives to confinement.

For minors, permit all attempts to avoid recourse to imprisonment, particularly in the absence of prior conviction or the possibility of making an appeal.

The return of a migrant family to their country of origin shall not systematically lead to the young migrant having to leave at the same time. We ask for the abolition of all discriminatory measures together with recognition of ethnic minorities' rights to live in the host country. In this spirit, we also request that expulsion measures shall not be imposed in addition to penal measures.

In order to make the public in all the member States more aware of the plight and existence of homeless people, we recommend that a European Day for the Homeless be established.

APPENDIX III

GROUP III : SHUT OUT YOUTH AND THE CYCLE OF VULNERABILITY

The cycle of vulnerability

We think that society has developed structures that shut out people and we are concerned that the identification of high risk groups does not lead to discrimination. For instance, running away from home should not always be looked on as negative behaviour.

Young homeless people present at the symposium felt like tokens in the discussions rather than equal partners. They recommend an increase in public awareness on homelessness to force governments to change their policies and recognize that homeless young people do not only need a decent place to live, they also need to learn how to cope independently. Thus they should not be suddenly cut off from institutionalised care.

Furthermore, social services should encourage groups of homeless people to get together to help each other.

Social workers, for their part, recognize that they have to respect the individual who consults them. Openness also implies offering a wide range of possibilities to help, and presenting realistic alternatives to shut-out youth. They recognize that help organisations exclude young people who then miss access to help facilities everywhere.

Policy-makers state that to prevent young people from being shut out and to help those who already are, a multidimensional approach is necessary through a co-ordination of relevant youth policies.

In conclusion, both young people and social workers should be involved in policy-making. Bureaucracy must be changed and a greater co-ordination would avoid gaps in the services available. Thought should be given to new models of working with (future) marginal groups: self-help groups, work in communities and with families, integrated help through a co-ordination of resources and programmes, "drop in groups", telephone-line help.

In terms of prevention (preventing young people entering the cycle of vulnerability), a strong emphasis was put on schools, youth organisations and other places where young people spend a lot of their time. It was suggested that:

1. School-teachers and other workers who have frequent contact with young people are better trained to recognize problems and to learn how to act on them.

2. Within the school system, time is set aside to discuss matters of family life and sexuality. Young people should get the feeling that it is normal to talk about problems. They should know that they are not the only ones who have problems and that they have the right to have something done about them.

3. Different systems of schooling should be offered. More attention should be given to school drop-outs and the reason why they drop out. More attention should be given to try and keep these kids within the school system by offering a suitable schooling for them.

4. Each young person who gets into the (State) help system gets a helper who follows the young person throughout his life in these institutions.

5. When giving help to children, the possibility should also exist to help the parents.

6. Institutions of social work should have the time and capacity to put their experiences with the problems that youth have into (political) recommendations to (local) governments. Governments should listen to them.

7. Young people should be more involved in policy-making in general, and specifically on the follow-up of this conference.

8. More recognition should be given to the consequences of emotional, sexual and physical abuse on children and young people. Such abuse is a one of the causes leading girls and boys to leave home and enter a cycle of vulnerability which can lead to homelessness and to chronic social exclusion.

APPENDIX IV

GROUP IV : LEGAL RIGHTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Legal rights

All young residents of a country should be entitled to the same legal and social rights, social benefits etc. as the citizens of the country.

The age of majority should be the same all over Europe: it should be 18.

It is the basic right of every young person to be informed of all legal rights and legal procedures.

Young people have the right to be heard when things are decided that affect their lives (lawyer of the child; ombudsperson).

Young people have the right to initiate a legal process through a person, organisation of his/her confidence.

Young people have the right to appeal decisions which affect their lives (lawyer of the child ...).

Young people have the right at the age of 16 to choose where they want to live without having to justify their choice.

If young people over 16 want to live autonomously, they have a right to get counselling, a minimum subsistence, housing.

Young people under the age of 16 in need have a right to immediate qualified, adequate counselling, food, income and shelter.

It is the responsibility of the public authorities to ensure the provision of these services.

Living homeless, without income, should be decriminalized (abolish vagrant laws).

Everybody has the right to a minimum guaranteed subsistence.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF AGES OF MAJORITY UNDER CIVIL LAW etc in Europe

	Age of majority under civil law	Age for criminal prose-cution	Voting age	Age of marriage with parents' consent		Working age	School-leaving age
				F	M		
Austria	19	18	19	14	16	15	15 or 19
Belgium	21	18	21(1) - 18(2)	15	18(4)	14	16
Denmark	18	15	18	15		15	16
Fed. Rep. of Germany	18	18	18	16	18(5)	14	14 or 16(9)
Finland	18	16	18	17	18	14	16
France	18	18	18	15	18(4)	16	16
Greece	18	18	18	18		15	15
Ireland	18	17	18	16		15	15
Italy	18	18	18 - 21 (3)	14	14(7)	15	14
Luxembourg	18	18	18	15	15(6)	15	15
Netherlands	21	18	18	16	16(8)	16	16
Norway	18	14	18	15		15	16
United Kingdom	18(10)	17	18	18(10)		16	16
Spain	18	18	18	14		16	14
Sweden	18	15	18	18		15	16
Portugal	18	16	18	16		14	14

(1) National elections
(2) Local and European elections
(3) Senate elections
(4) The Procureur du Roi de la République may grant dispensations
(5) Or vice versa
(6) Dispensation from the Grand Duke is required however
(7) With the authorization of the Juvenile Court
(8) It is possible to marry at 18; between the ages of 16 and 18 it is possible to marry if a doctor certifies that the woman is pregnant. In addition, the crown may grant age dispensations
(9) At the age of 14, the person concerned must follow vocational training courses
(10) In Scotland, the age of majority under civil law and the age of marriage with parents' consent is 16

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NB. This table has been put together during the Symposium on the basis of available documentation and may, in consequence contain errors. The Secretariat would be happy for any correction send to help establish a revised and corrected version of the table.

APPENDIX VI

Strasbourg, 7 September 1987 CDJ/HOMY (87) 5 rev.1

SYMPOSIUM ON "SHUT OUT YOUTH"
25-30 OCTOBER 1987
European Youth Centre

P R O G R A M M E

Sunday 25 October

Arrival of participants
Registration at the European Youth Centre (EYC)

19h00 Dinner

20h30 Keynote address to the Symposium
Mr. A.A. LACERDA DE QUEIROZ, Member of European Parliament, Committee on Social Affairs and Employment

21h00 Reception by the Director of the European Youth Centre

Monday 26 October

9h30 Opening of the Symposium : Introduction to the European Youth Centre by Peter Lauritzen, EYC

Statement on "Young people's needs and the response of social policy" by Franco Marziale, Director of the EYC

Statement on "The European Young Homelessness Group - a network for the work with the homeless in Europe" by Nic Fenton, London

Introduction to the programme of the Symposium, its working methods and the working documents

14h30 Presentation of exhibition materials (Market place)

16h00 Presentation of Working group II
"Methods and Models of working Practice"

17h00 Presentation of Working group IV
"Legal Rights of Shut out Youth"

Tuesday 27 October

9h30 Presentation of working group III
"The Cycle of Vulnerability"

11h00 Working groups

14h30 Working groups continued

Wednesday 28 October

9h30 Working groups

14h30 Plenary session : "The future of liaison and co-operation between services working for young homeless people in Europe"

16h00 Occasion for visits :
European Parliament, Council of Europe, City of Strasbourg, etc.

20h00 Round-table discussion with parliamentarians

Thursday 29 October

9h30 Working groups

11h30 Meeting with a group of young homeless and youth workers, holding a simultaneous session in Strasbourg

14h30 Plenary session : Presentation of the report of the Symposium by the Rapporteur General
Exchange of views on the report

17h00 Closing session and evaluation of the Symposium

21h00 Farewell Party

Friday 30 October

Departure of participants

PROGRAMME-NOTES

1. There is no separate plenary for Theme 1 as this is dealt within the opening plenary.

2. Additional workshops, discussion groups, committees, etc. can be created by participants.

3. Theme reports will be drafted on Wednesday for translation and duplication. They will be conformed or amended by theme groups on Thursday. This allows the rapporteur to begin to drafting the Final Report on Wednesday.

4. This programme omits the details of working lunches, video showings and other events. These will be posted daily for the attention of participants.

APPENDIX VII

1.11.1987

Symposium on "Shut Out Youth"
Strasbourg, 25-30 October 1987

Symposium sur "Les Jeunes Laissés pour Compte"
Strasbourg, 25-30 octobre 1987

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Strasbourg, 1 October 1987

CEJ/HOMY (87) 5
or. Eng.

SYMPOSIUM ON "SHUT OUT YOUTH"
25-30 October 1987
European Youth Centre

The European Young Homelessness Group

HISTORY

A senior representative of the French Ministère de la Santé et de la Sécurité Sociale visited projects in Europe and America and produced a report for the French Government at the end of 1979 on young homeless people.

There was a conference on the subjects raised in the report in Paris in 1980. As well as French participants, delegates from London and Brussels attended to present details of their own work.

One of the projects involved was SMAEI, a group for action and research on education in Brussels. Representatives of this project set up an informal meeting in Paris in June 1982 which was attended by workers from the UK, France, Germany, Holland and Italy, whose organisations provided shelter to young people.

As a result of this meeting, a study trip was set up for Belgian social workers to look at the practice in other European countries and to discover innovative ways to provide services for young people in distress. They also examined the causes of youth homelessness and discussed the need for a network of organisations working in this field to exchange information and ideas on common problems. They visited London, Paris, Amsterdam, Munster and Berlin and a detailed report, newspaper articles and a series of recommendations followed their trip. The Belgians took on the duties of a secretariat for the group.

A further conference took place in Strasbourg in September 1983 with additional representatives from Ireland and Switzerland.

This first Strasbourg meeting agreed to set up a co-ordinating network of agencies and agreed to prepare for a more formal conference in September 1984. The Secretariat passed to the French delegates from Point Jeunes and a planning meeting was held in Lille in June 1984. The formal conference eventually took place in May 1985 and was again held in Strasbourg. The delegates agreed to seek the support of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe and took a number of opportunities during the conference to meet with MEPs and officials.

There was a follow-up conference in Munster in October 1985 and a separate conference on the problems of Irish youth was held at Cork with the support of the European Commission. The secretariat passed to the UK representatives and it was agreed that the main focus should be to get the support of the European Parliament and the financial support of the EEC Commission for the ongoing work of the group.

In the last two years, the UK secretariat can point to a number of useful achievements. Information in an attractive brochure, on the work of the European Young Homelessness Group has been produced in English, French and German and distributed widely to MEP's, Foundations, academics, youth and social workers and other interested individuals.

The secretariat has been responsible for a number of articles in journals and magazines on youth issues in Europe. They have ensured that EYHG is represented on the boards of Childhope International (a charity for street children) and the United Kingdom committee of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. They have also been consulted on a major study by the European Foundation on 'Young People, Housing and Social Cohesion'.

Perhaps the most important achievement has been, with the help of its Parliamentary Consultant, Elisabeth Drury, to contribute to the first report by the Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on Homelessness in Europe. This was debated in the Parliament in June 1987 and was strongly supported by a wide range of MEP's. However the European Commissioner did not feel it was his responsibility to have a policy for the EEC on homelessness and gave a cold response to the report.

Unfortunately the secretariat has not been successful in raising substantial funding to support the work of the EYHG and this in turn has meant that it has been unable to improve inter group communication or to expand the work of EYHG as a whole.

We hope that the symposium in Strasbourg will help to clarify a number of issues and provide ways forward for the European Young Homeless Group.

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"Verdandisten"
Språkrör för socialpolitik och medmänsklighet, STOCKHOLM, Sweden

"Youth Exchange"
Newsletter of the National Youth in Care Network, Ottawa, Canada

* * *

VIDEOS shown during the Symposium

	Participant contact
"Auf und Davon", ZDF, 45 mins, VHS	Erwin Jordan
"DHSS Welcome", 35 mins, U-Matic	Damian Killeen
"Emergency Master Edit", VHS	Eddie O'Byrne
"Focus Point and Homeless People", 2½ hrs, VHS	Justin O'Brien
"Het Poortgebouw", 15 mins, VHS	Ingrid Grootveld
"Het Sas", 39 mins, VHS	Tania De Metsenaere
"Histoire de Vivre", 13 mins, U-Matic	Point Jeunes
"Information about the girls' house", 1¼ hrs	Ursula Funk
"Job Line Reports - 1", 30 mins, VHS	Jim Forbes
"Lost", 1 hr, VHS	Ingrid Grootveld
"New Outsiders", 50 mins, VHS	Colin Chalmers
"Runaways" (CBC, Canada), 2 hrs, VHS	Michael Farris
"Silent Girls", 90 mins, VHS	Bo Ertmann
"The Culture Dairy", 30 mins, VHS (Swedish with written summary in English)	Lars Alexandersson

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